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ABSTRACT

Some of the necessary characteristics for a successful cross-grade tutorial reading program are described. The program incorporates characteristics conducive to maximizing the learning appeal such as preplanning with school personnel; attitudinal emphasis; orientation enrichment sessions with tutors; varied multisensory approaches coupled with multimedia learning centers; record keeping by tutors; ongoing supervision, analysis, direction, and evaluation by the reading teacher in charge; and community participation. Test results of one tutoring cycle, representative of many others during a 6-year period, are included. Thirteen fifth and sixth graders, all remedial students, were matched as tutors with a like number of second and third graders as tutees for a 10-week tutorial cycle. All children were pretested and post-tested with the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary and Comprehension Tests. The second and third graders also took the Stanford Reading Test; the fifth and sixth graders took the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, Reading Section. All averaged 2 years or more below their reading grade level at the start of the program. At the end of 10 weeks, the second and third graders averaged a 4-month or more reading gain; the fifth and sixth graders, tutoring mornings and receiving remediation afternoons, averaged a 1-year or more reading gain. (CL)

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FACETS OF A CROSS-GRADE TUTORIAL PROGRAM

IRA Convention, Anaheim, California, May 7, 1970

IDENTIFYING SOME NECESSARY CHARACTERISTICS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CROSS-GRADE TUTORIAL PROGRAM IN READING

Children can profitably become involved in a Cross-Grade Tutorial program that will serve to reinforce their total school learning experience.

Emphasis is being placed upon a cross-grade rather than intra-grade tutoring. In a cross-grade situation there is a better chance for long term success because of both the age distance

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between tutor and tutee as well as the difference in academic levels. A minimum differential of two years in both age and achievement would be most beneficial for optimum gain. Such a differential heightens the value of the 'image identity model' and lessens the tendency toward resentment or a personality clash.

Tutors are not teachers in any sense of the word! This is an important characteristic in a successful program. From the very outset children understand that they are tutoring not teaching. Some day some may aspire to become teachers but at this time they can assist others under the guidance and direction of a teacher.

The program also has enrichment value for tutors. They, too, must be able to show evidence of learning growth through pre and post testing to justify their participation in the program. Since we are vitally concerned with the tutor as well as the tutee, orientation sessions must be conducted regularly. At these sessions a tutor's own reading needs are better identified. Attitudes conducive to good learning and study

habits are built up and reinforced. This is accomplished through reassurance, remediation, and directed research.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The idea of students helping students is not a new one. It can be traced back to the 'monitorial system' devised by Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell in England in 1841. As a matter of fact, Comenius advocated tutoring as far back as 1632. Many cross-grade tutorial programs have surfaced during the past decade with varying degrees of success. Educational journals are reporting an ever increasing amount of research on this subject. This portends an upsurge of interest in this direction and presages a definite trend.

The purpose of this program is to fulfill a specific need. The primary grade teacher is supplied with an approach towards reaching a greater number of children at an early age. An important avenue for the primary teacher to reach this goal is the use of other students. There are ways in which a child can reach another child where adults cannot.

Teachers of the upper grades report that a new interest in learning has been kindled in the tutors. This newly generated enthusiasm in learning on the part of the tutors permeates the entire upper grade classroom and gives the teacher additional leverage in the added aspirational goals. The much sought ingredient of 'motivation' occurs repeatedly as children seek knowledge which they can transmit and put to immediate use. There is a need to know 'now' , and there is an immediate sense of satisfaction in putting this knowledge to use.

Reading teachers welcome the injection of a 'new spirit' into the remedial situation. The reading room is now much sought after. Children seek out their teacher in the hope of becoming a tutor. Such contact in itself is very valuable, however, the character-building values developed through a desire to serve are immeasurable. Reading teachers find relief from the routine of pure remedial work and look forward to the realization of ever higher enrichment goals as high-achievers are drawn into the program to serve as tutors.

ATTITUDINAL EMPHASIS AND APPROACH

A successful tutorial program must begin with the fullest cooperation and help of administrators, teachers, tutors, and tutees. With the first signs of success there develops a greater sensitivity on the part of all concerned. This leads to a smoother functioning of the program.

Teachers and members of the faculty must be apprised of the total strategy and plan. They will be interested in knowing that the program does not burden them with extra work. On the contrary, the tutors will reinforce their teachings and will add new dimensions to the classroom learning situation.

Administrators are delighted to see the learning that takes place. In every instance of this writer's experience, they have requested an expansion of the program so that a greater number of children are serviced. They are also pleased by the negligible extra costs, and are heartened by the extensive community support.

Arrangements are made through the school administration for the use of the school auditorium, library, or lunch bench area for the tutoring hour. It is important that the pairs be well-separated one from another, as close quarters may bring interference and diminish the program's effectiveness.

Teachers sometimes need to reschedule classroom subject matter, but they invariably feel the gains involved in the tutorial program warrant such modifications in schedule.

The tutees are recommended in consultation with the administration and the classroom teacher. They are then tested by the reading teacher. The children with deeper-rooted reading or emotional problems are screened out, since they are in need of the more direct specialized and expert care of the professional. Tutors are selected in the same manner. They, too, are screened and tested. Potential tutors should have desirable personality traits, such as a pleasant and positive demeanor.

The selection process referred to above cannot be defined with any hard and fast rule. Only the general principle has been enunciated; namely the need to be aware of deep seated aberrations which require the special attention of a highly skilled counselor. It should be noted, however, that sometimes students who are seemingly emotional deviates have been selected at the discretion of the reading specialist with highly beneficial results, both as tutors and tutees.

Tutorial success had been achieved with girls as well as boys; with the gifted outstanding student as well as the under-achiever. Many children with classroom adjustment problems relate well in a tutorial situation. In many instances this form of tutorial help reverses the discouragement-failure syndrome and starts the youngsters on a new path with new attitudes toward school and learning.

After tutors and tutees have been selected, orientation sessions for tutors begin. These sessions are conducted by the reading teacher. Emphasis is placed upon gaining a pleasant,

relaxed, cordial relationship. This attitude pervades in all areas of tutor-tutee activities and helps to produce and nurture favorable reading and learning experiences.

Each tutor is introduced to a much broader outlook via the 'SPACE AGE' tutoring principles which become part of his understanding. 'SPACE AGE' is a mnemonic device which covers the following principles, comprising the main themes of the orientation sessions:

Success experiences for all involved.
Patience and understanding with youngsters.
Accept your tutee as he is and help him.
Compliment him for learning and cooperation.
Enter daily results of your accomplishments.

Ask your reading teacher when you need help.
Give your child the best of yourself.
Enjoy school by helping others.

In these principles the tutor learns that success experiences, however slight, encourage further success experiences. He recognizes the value of patience and understanding. The newly developed awareness also helps him to understand his own teachers better. By accepting his tutee, the tutor becomes cognizant of individual differences and will not be as apt to compare his personal achievements to the detriment of others, including his peers. In learning to compliment, he learns the value of the well-earned 'pat-on-the-back' and its spurring effect toward even greater achievements.

Tutors keep a daily log of their accomplishments with very simple notations. It is good for both tutor and tutee to see progress on a day-to-day basis. They are encouraged to discuss results, problems, etc. when necessary. They commit themselves to giving their best to their tutee and are discouraged from conversing with fellow tutors during the tutorial period. The whole program is tied together by the expectation that tutors will enjoy school better through helping others.

During their early orientation sessions, tutors elect a

chairman, co-chairman, and secretary. Only the chairman calls for the tutees, in order to minimize classroom disruptions. The co-chairman is the official timekeeper during the tutoring period. The secretary takes minutes during the orientation sessions. This organization is taken quite seriously by the children and helps growth in leadership, democracy, and responsibility.

Tutors are furnished a kit which contains:

A basal textbook

A library book

Various tools for learning:

- A pocket tachistoscope
- A word-wheel
- Alphabet card
- A lap chalkboard, chalk, and cloth
- A pad, pencils with erasers

Tutors learn the organizational structure of the program and how to use the materials in the kit. They are now ready for their first session with their tutees.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The tutoring period consists of 40 minutes three days a week. The remaining days of the week are set aside for tutor's orientation and enrichment activities. The program is conducted in cycles of 10 weeks, or 20 tutorial hours. At the end of each tutorial cycle, a week is set aside for testing, analysis, and evaluation. Decisions as to who should be re-invited to join the new cycle are based upon gains made.

The 40 minute period is divided into four sections. This division allows for a variety of approaches with multisensory activities. These diverse activities assure maximum attention-getting and holding power. Time allotments are flexible, however, and tutors are not required to adhere to them rigidly. They may vary their individualized reading program to suit the tutee's mood, interests, and to take advantage of the 'teachable moment'.

The basic time allocations are:

1) Oral Reading and Comprehension - A Basal-Visual Approach

The tutee reads to his tutor from a basal text series, and

the tutor asks comprehension questions. The reading teacher tests the tutees periodically and sets the pace. The pace must not be too fast or too difficult. A tendency for tutors to compare and compete with each other must be discouraged. At no point should the child be exposed to the frustration level of learning.

Once a tutor wrote; "I happened to be looking around in the auditorium while my student was reading. He said to me; 'Hey, are you listening?' Now, I really have to listen to every word he says, or he catches me."

2) Phonics - Auditory Approach

The tutee is given practice in auditory discrimination, such as recognizing consonants, blends, and digraphs in various positions. Such practice takes place with the help of paired pictures and word rhymes. A number of workbooks are suitable for this type of activity. Phonics cards are also used for reinforcement value.

3) Vocabulary Practice - Kinesthetic-Manipulative Approach

The tutor may use any of the learning tools in his kit to practice high-frequency vocabulary words, both in isolation and in context.

The lap chalkboard, for example, is an indispensible tool. It allows for an infinite variety of stimulating learning activities. Tutors take delight in 'inventing' new uses for the chalkboard in a tutoring situation. Many tutors eagerly anticipate the orientation sessions where they may share their creative ideas. The interested peer group will listen, and credit the valuable suggestions, thereby boosting the ego of the innovator, while the secretary officially records these ideas in the minutes.

4) Story-Time - A Literary Approach

A limited but choice selection of books covering a wide range of high interest potential is available in the reading room. The tutor guides his tutee in the selection of one such book. The tutee now has a book of 'his' choice read to 'him' alone. This

personal attention helps to extend further the tutee's appreciation for books. The story-time approach serves to lengthen the attention span and provides for a valuable exercise of good listening habits.

Now tutor's own diction, expression, and appreciation for punctuation show improvement. His reading is meaningful and purposeful. A genuine need for clear effective articulation and communication exists. Many a tutee's desire for additional information has sent the tutor scurrying through available reference books.

In all the above interactions, a unique social relationship develops which has its own educational dimensions. It will be readily recognized that such friendships once developed are in themselves rather important secondary gains of the tutorial program.

THE MULTI-MEDIA DIMENSION

Tutors at orientation sessions are trained in the use of various multi-media techniques and in the care of all the

equipment used. Learning centers are set up in the reading room and tutors make use of them on a rotational basis.

The following items have been used successfully by the tutor-tutee pairs.

Viewing Centers:

Filmstrip projector

Overhead projector

Large chalkboard

Listening Centers:

Record player

Tape recorder

Filmstrip projector in conjunction with the record player.

Other electronic hardware

Kinesthetic-Manipulative Centers:

The typewriter (progressing from the alphabet and leading up to Van Allen's Language Experience Approach)

Puzzles for perceptual conceptualizations (forms, letters, words, and sentence puzzles)

Large three-dimensional letters (forming words, and tracing)

Realia kits (three-dimensional objects used as conversational stimulants, role-playing simulations, representations of consonants, blends, and digraphs in initial, medial, and final positions)

Tutors gain practice in the use and care of these valuable learning tools during orientation sessions. They are eager to transmit their newly acquired skills to their tutees. Tutors are rated by the reading teacher for attitude, responsibility, and dependability. A very simple rating scale is used, such as a 'plus' sign for 'excellence', and an 'equals' sign for 'satisfactory'.

THE READING TEACHER'S ROLE

The reading teacher is an integral part of the program throughout. He is totally aware of all that is going on. He

makes notes for items he wishes to discuss or clarify at each orientation session. He inspires, guides, and encourages creativity. He sets high but attainable standards with short and long-term goals. Children's scholastic aspirational levels are raised continually, but always kept within reach. The reading teacher is a fully accepted member of the tutorial team as he 'sits in' and tunes to with each pair, with an occasional encouraging or helpful comment, and enjoys the full flavor of the 'happenings'.

A master check list containing each child's reading level, skill attainments, learning pace, attitude, books and materials covered, dates, etc., is necessary. This master check list is kept current by referring to the tutor's log record, consultations with tutors and tutees, discussion during orientation sessions, and results of an ongoing testing program.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The community is pleasantly involved by invitations to

come and see the program in action. Visitors repeatedly express enjoyment as they see the children working together in such harmony. The children are so absorbed in their activity that they do not realize the presence of the guests. At least they do not give any outward indication. They just carry on!

Parents participate in the making of felt badges with a 'T' for tutor. Tutors wear these with justifiable pride. It is quite an honor to be selected a tutor.

TESTING RESULTS

Following are test results of one tutoring cycle, representative of many others during a six year period in which this program has been operative.

Thirteen fifth and sixth graders, all remedial students themselves, were matched as tutors with a like number of second and third graders as tutees for a ten-week tutorial cycle. All the children were pre and post tested with the Gates McGinitie Vocabulary and Comprehension Tests. In addition, the second and third graders were administered the

Stanford Reading Test, while the fifth and sixth graders took the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, Reading Section.

At the start of the program, the children, both tutors and tutees, averaged two years or more below their reading grade level.

At the end of the 10 week cycle, the second and third graders averaged 4 months reading growth in the Stanford Reading Test and 5 months reading growth in the Gates-McGinitie Tests. Maximum gain by any one student was 1 year 5 months on the Gates-McGinitie.

The fifth and sixth graders who tutored in the mornings and received remediation in the afternoons had an average of 1 year 5 months gain on the CTBS and 1 year gain on the Gates-McGinitie. Maximum gain by any one student was 2 years 2 months on the Gates-McGinitie.

Similar results have been charted each year of the six years that this program has been in effect.

CONCLUSIONS

This tutorial program incorporates characteristics which are conducive to maximizing the learning appeal such as; pre-planning with school personnel; attitudinal emphasis; orientation-enrichment sessions with tutors; varied multisensory approaches coupled with multi-media learning centers; record keeping by tutors; ongoing supervision, analysis, direction, and evaluation by the reading teacher in charge; and community participation.

The results produced in a relatively short period of time were significant. Equally important to the academic gain is the development of personal image through success-oriented, school-centered involvement.

The following may be added directly to the text or as an addendum in the form of an editor's note.

-The Rosner Tutorial Approach is currently in use with equal success in the culturally deprived areas, on the one hand, and the culturally advantaged school district on the other.